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TAGS: PREL, MARR, RW, UN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES L DARIS  
DATE/CASE ID: 02 MAY 2007 200103014

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SUBJECT: UNAMIR RADIO BROADCASTS

REF: A) USUN NEW YORK 432; B) LETTER FROM RWANDA PERMREP TO UNSC PRESIDENT, 02/03/95; C) SHESTACK-STETTENBAUER FAX, 02/08/95

1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARAGRAPH EIGHT.
2. (C) SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA (GOR) CONTENDS THAT DELAYS IN STARTING UP RADIO UNAMIR WERE CAUSED BY UNAMIR'S FAILURE TO FOLLOW INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED PROCEDURES, PROBLEMS OF DESIGN AND TRANSMISSION SITE CHOICES BY UNAMIR ENGINEERS, AND UNAMIR'S REFUSAL TO PROVIDE THE GOR WITH THE SPECIFICATIONS OF THEIR EQUIPMENT. THE UN REBUTS THESE CHARGES, OUTLINING A SERIES OF DIFFICULTIES WITH THE GOR OVER FREQUENCY ALLOCATIONS AND APPROVAL OF TRANSMITTER SITES. DEPT SEEKS POST'S ASSESSMENT. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

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3. (C) AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF UNAMIR'S MANDATE IN RWANDA IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RADIO STATION TO PROVIDE A RELIABLY NEUTRAL SOURCE OF NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR RWANDANS INSIDE THE COUNTRY AND IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS. SUCH PROGRAMS HAVE PROVEN EFFECTIVE IN OTHER PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, NOTABLY UNTAC IN CAMBODIA. THE U.S. HAS SUPPORTED RADIO UNAMIR NOT ONLY IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL BUT ALSO BY SELLING THE UN A MOBILE RADIO STUDIO VAN (THE CONFIDENTIAL

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"VOYAGER") UNDER A SECTION 607 AGREEMENT. WE HAVE PRESSED THE UN IN RWANDA OPERATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS AND THE GOR IN VARIOUS BILATERAL MEETINGS TO COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN EXPEDITIOUS IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROGRAM. NOT ONLY DID RWANDAN VP KAGAME PROMISE THE UNSC IN DECEMBER THAT BROADCASTING WOULD BE ABLE TO COMMENCE WITHIN DAYS, AS NOTED IN REF A PARAGRAPH FOUR, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE ALSO GAVE HIS PERSONAL ASSURANCES TO AF A/S GEORGE MOOSE THAT ALL OBSTACLES TO RADIO UNAMIR'S START-UP WOULD BE RESOLVED.

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4. (C) REF B IS A LETTER TO THE UNSC PRESIDENT FROM THE RWANDAN PERMREP ALLEGING FAILURES BY UNAMIR TO ABIDE BY "INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS" IN SETTING UP THE RADIO PROGRAM. AMONG THE TRANSGRESSIONS CLAIMED ARE: CONDUCTING RADIO TRANSMISSION TESTS WITHOUT GOR AUTHORIZATION IN NOVEMBER AND USE OF EQUIPMENT SIMILAR YET "MORE POWERFUL" THAN THAT USED BY RADIO RWANDA AND THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY, RWANDATEL (WHICH THE GOR CLAIMS WOULD "CAUSE INTERFERENCE AND EVEN DISABLE" THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM). FURTHERMORE, THE LETTER STATES THAT UNAMIR CHOSE FREQUENCIES VERY CLOSE TO THOSE USED BY RADIO RWANDA, WHICH THE GOR CONTENDS WOULD BE ANOTHER POTENTIAL SOURCE OF SIGNAL INTERFERENCE. IN CLOSING, THE LETTER STATES THAT THE GOR WILL BE FLEXIBLE ON THE ISSUE OF FREQUENCY ALLOCATIONS, ALLOWING BROADCASTS TO COMMENCE "VERY SOON." THE LETTER ALSO STATES THAT THE LOCATION OF TRANSMITTERS HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY RESOLVED.

5. (C) REF C IS A CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM UNAMIR FORCECOM MG TOUSIGNANT (PROTECT) WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO REF B

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LETTER. THE REPORT ADDRESSES EACH OF THE RWANDAN PERMREP'S COMPLAINTS: THE EQUIPMENT TO BE USED BY RADIO UNAMIR AND POSSIBLY CO-LOCATED WITH RADIO RWANDA AND RWANDATEL EQUIPMENT WAS MANUFACTURED BY "MAJOR ELECTRONICS COMPANIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS AND (ITS) USE WOULD NOT CREATE ANY PROBLEMS FOR EITHER STATION, SO LONG AS THE PROPER FREQUENCIES ARE ALLOCATED." THE CHOICE TO POSITION TRANSMITTERS OUTSIDE THE UNAMIR COMPOUND WAS MADE IN RESPONSE TO THE GOR'S EXPRESSED MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE LACK OF

"TRANSPARENCY" OF THE RADIO PROGRAM WERE MOST OF THE TRANSMITTERS TO BE LOCATED WITHIN THE COMPOUND. SUBSEQUENTLY THE ALTERNATIVE SITES, ON MOUNTAIN TOPS WITH RWANDATEL AND RADIO RWANDA TRANSMITTERS, WERE DENIED GOR APPROVAL FOR FEAR OF SIGNAL INTERFERENCE (AS NOTED IN PARA. FOUR ABOVE). UNAMIR'S MILITARY AND CIVILIAN COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS, ALONG WITH A TECHNICAL CONSULTANT FROM GEC MARCONI, DISPUTE THESE FEARS AS UNFOUNDED. THE

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GOR'S SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE SITES INCLUDED ONE WITH NO ROAD ACCESS.

6. (C) THE CONFIDENTIAL UNAMIR REPORT ALSO OUTLINES SEVERAL WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDED TO THE GOR REGARDING BROADCAST LICENSE, FREQUENCY ALLOCATION, EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS AND NOTIFICATION THAT TESTING WOULD COMMENCE IN NOVEMBER. WHEN REQUESTED TO CEASE TESTING IN NOVEMBER, UNAMIR CLAIMS TO HAVE CEASED IMMEDIATELY. UNAMIR'S REPORT REBUTS THE GOR'S COMPLAINTS THAT UNAMIR HAS BEEN THE UNCOOPERATIVE PARTY, STATING THAT UNAMIR HAS COMPLIED WITH ALL NATIONAL RULES AND

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REGULATIONS, PROVIDED ALL REQUESTED INFORMATION, OFFERED CERTAIN GUARANTEES SOUGHT BY THE GOR, ASSURED THE GOR THAT RADIO UNAMIR WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH RADIO RWANDA BROADCASTS, ALLOWED GOR REPRESENTATIVES TO INSPECT ALL BROADCASTING AND STUDIO EQUIPMENT IN KIGALI AND OFFERED THE SAME INSPECTION REGIME AT OTHER TRANSMITTER SITES, WHEN ESTABLISHED.

7. (C) THE U.S. DOES NOT WANT TO INSERT ITSELF INTO THIS QUARREL ANY MORE THAN IS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND GET RADIO UNAMIR ON THE AIR. RATHER THAN ADDRESSING THE SPECIFICS OF THE GOR'S ALLEGATIONS OR UNAMIR'S REBUTTAL, DEPT FEELS IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR EMBASSY KIGALI TO ADOPT THE POSITION OF "HONEST BROKER" AND ACT AS GO-BETWEEN IN AN EFFORT TO CUT THE RHETORIC AND GET THE PLAYERS FOCUSED ON PRACTICAL ISSUES. JUDGING FROM THE TWO DOCUMENTS (REFS B AND C), THERE REMAIN SOME GENUINE PROBLEMS OF FREQUENCY ALLOCATION AND TRANSMITTER SITES, WHICH EACH SIDE CLAIMS TO BE READY TO RESOLVE. U.S. INVOLVEMENT MIGHT SERVE TO BRING THIS TO CLOSURE.

ACTION REQUEST

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8. (LOU) EMBASSY KIGALI IS REQUESTED TO APPROACH THE GOR AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL TO REMIND THEM OF VP KAGAME'S PERSONAL ASSURANCES TO AF A/S GEORGE MOOSE AND PROMISES MADE DURING HIS DECEMBER 1994 MEETING WITH UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS THAT THIS ISSUE WOULD BE RESOLVED. YOU

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SHOULD POINT OUT THAT ISSUANCE OF A LICENSE TO PERMIT THE BROADCASTS IN PRINCIPLE IS A POSITIVE STEP, BUT THAT OTHER  
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TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS, SUCH AS FREQUENCY ALLOCATIONS, NEED TO BE ADDRESSED AS WELL. PROVISION OF A SUITABLE LOCATION FOR BROADCASTS IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF UNAMIR'S RADIO PROGRAM, WHICH WE HOPE WILL RECEIVE A LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM THE GOR COMMENSURATE WITH THE U.S.'S HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST. PLEASE CONDUCT FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS AS APPROPRIATE WITH UNAMIR AND THE GOR. DEPT WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE POST'S ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF THIS PROGRAM, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER WAYS IN WHICH WE MIGHT USEFULLY BECOME INVOLVED IN REMOVING REMAINING OBSTACLES.

CHRISTOPHER

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